

## **Activity 6.1: Race to the Top / Early Learning Challenge Support to Temporary, 1 & 2 Star Programs 2015 Final Report**

### **Contract Numbers**

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### *Submitted to the:*

North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education

### *On behalf of:*

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## **Introduction**

Nationally, North Carolina has been a leader in the early care and education field and it is with much appreciation that the North Carolina Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Council works with the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education to advance this system. This report will provide a summary of the accomplishments of the Race to the Top/Early Learning Challenge Grants (RttT-ELC): Activity 6.1 - Support to Temporary, 1- & 2- Star Programs. A summary of the accomplishments of this initiative throughout the project, including subjective information about lessons learned, challenges, successes and any implications across projects for future policy decisions has been included in this report.

### **Activity 6.1: Technical Assistance (TA) to Support Temporary, 1- and 2- Star Programs**

The intent of this initiative was to provide technical assistance to support Temporary, 1- and 2- star centers and homes to move to 3- star or higher licensure. Contract Management Agencies (CMA) contracted with the Regional Lead Agencies (RLAs) to support the efforts of technical assistance (TA) staff to provide technical assistance, grants, and other supports to support early care and education programs as they worked to increase their star rating to 3- stars or higher.

RLAs developed regional plans for identifying, recruiting, and supporting Temporary, 1- and 2- star programs. CCR&Rs chose a variety of ways to utilize available funding, including increasing technical assistance staff, delivery of intensive technical assistance, and awarding of grants and bonuses to participating programs to increase licensure.

Statewide, 100% of all Temporary, 1- and 2- star facilities were identified each calendar year and a total of 840 licensed programs serving children birth to five years of age agreed to work toward a higher star rated license. Please see chart on the next page for achievement of specific performance measures:

**RttT ELC Final Progress Report for Support to Temporary, 1- and 2- Star Rated Programs**

<b>Outcomes and Outputs</b>	<b>Year 1 (2013)</b>	<b>Year 2 (2014)</b>	<b>Year 3 (2015)</b>	<b>Final Results</b>
Identify 100% Temporary and 1- and 2-star programs and recruit for participation.	<b>Achieved</b> 100% of all Temporary and 1- and 2-star rated programs were recruited for participation via phone calls, site visits, meetings, letters and emails as evidenced by regional reports.	<b>Achieved</b> 100% of all Temporary and 1- and 2-star rated programs were recruited for participation via phone calls, site visits, meetings, letters and emails as evidenced by regional reports.	<b>Achieved</b> 100% of all Temporary and 1- and 2-star rated programs were recruited for participation via phone calls, site visits, meetings, letters and emails as evidenced by regional reports.	<b>Achieved</b> 100% of all Temporary and 1- and 2-star rated programs were recruited for participation via phone calls, site visits, meetings, letters and emails as evidenced by regional reports.
Provide technical assistance for programs willing to work towards attaining a 3 star or higher rated license.	<b>Achieved</b> Provided technical assistance to <b>393</b> programs (100%) that agreed to participate in this program and work towards attaining a 3 star or higher rated license.	<b>Achieved</b> Provided technical assistance to <b>298</b> programs (100%) that agreed to participate in this program and work towards attaining a 3 star or higher rated license.	<b>Achieved</b> Provided technical assistance to <b>149</b> programs (100%) that agreed to participate in this program and work towards attaining a 3 star or higher rated license.	<b>Achieved</b> Provided technical assistance to <b>840</b> programs (100%) that agreed to participate in this program and work towards attaining a 3 star or higher rated license.
Develop quality improvement plans for programs willing to work towards attaining a 3 star or higher rated license.	<b>Achieved</b> <b>353</b> (90%) of all programs that agreed to participate in this program developed quality improvement plans to work towards attaining a 3 star or higher rated license.	<b>Achieved</b> <b>298</b> (100%) of all programs that agreed to participate in this program developed quality improvement plans to work towards attaining a 3 star or higher rated license.	<b>Achieved</b> <b>149</b> (100%) of all programs that agreed to participate in this program developed quality improvement plans to work towards attaining a 3 star or higher rated license.	<b>Partially Achieved</b> <b>800</b> (95%) of all programs that agreed to participate in this program developed quality improvement plans to work towards attaining a 3 star or higher rated license.
Statewide, 80% of participating Temporary, 1- & 2-star programs will make application for a 3-star or higher star rated license.	<b>Partially Achieved</b> <b>301</b> (77%) of all programs that agreed to participate in this program made an application for a 3 star or higher rated license.	<b>Partially Achieved</b> <b>197</b> (66%) of all programs that agreed to participate in this program made an application for a 3 star or higher rated license.	<b>Exceeded</b> <b>122</b> (81%) of all programs that agreed to participate in this program made an application for a 3 star or higher rated license.	<b>Partially Achieved</b> <b>620</b> (74%) of all programs that agreed to participate in this program made an application for a 3 star or higher rated license.
Lead CCR&R agencies will make or ensure at least 2 contacts per year with each field consultant in the region.	<b>Exceeded</b> Lead CCR&R agencies and/or their local partners made at least <b>2</b> contacts with each field consultant in the region. In fact <b>390</b> contacts were made in 2013.	<b>Exceeded</b> Lead CCR&R agencies will make or ensure at least <b>2</b> contacts per year with each field consultant in the region. In fact <b>536</b> contacts were made in 2013.	<b>Exceeded</b> Lead CCR&R agencies and/or their local partners made at least <b>2</b> contacts with each field consultant in the region. In fact <b>247</b> contacts were made in 2015.	<b>Exceeded</b> Lead CCR&R agencies and/or their local partners made at least <b>2</b> contacts with each field consultant in the region. In total, <b>1,173</b> contacts were made regarding this project and a great deal of collaboration occurred since 2012.

Outcomes and Outputs:	Year 1 (2013)	Year 2 (2014)	Year 3 (2015)	Final Results
At the conclusion of each RTT/ELC calendar year, 20% of Temporary and 1- & 2 - star programs still in operation will achieve a minimum of a 3 - star rated license.	<b>Exceeded</b> At the conclusion of the RTT/ELC calendar year 2013, <b>36%</b> of Temporary and 1- & 2 - star programs receiving TA and still in operation achieved a minimum of a 3 - star rated license.	<b>Exceeded</b> At the conclusion of the RTT/ELC calendar year 2014, <b>57%</b> of Temporary and 1- & 2 - star programs receiving TA and still in operation achieved a minimum of a 3 - star rated license.	<b>Exceeded</b> At the conclusion of the RTT/ELC calendar year 2015, <b>69%</b> of Temporary and 1- & 2 - star programs receiving TA and still in operation achieved a minimum of a 3 - star rated license.	<b>Exceeded</b> At the conclusion of the RTT/ELC project, <b>49%</b> of Temporary and 1- & 2 - star programs receiving TA and still in operation achieved a minimum of a 3 - star rated license.
At the conclusion of each RTT/ELC calendar year, 85% of participating programs receiving technical assistance and completing a technical assistance evaluation will document increased knowledge of quality programming.	<b>Exceeded</b> At the end of the RTT/ELC calendar year of 2013, <b>(99%)</b> of the participating programs that received technical assistance and completed a technical assistance evaluation documented increased knowledge of quality programming.	<b>Exceeded</b> At the end of the RTT/ELC calendar year 2014, <b>(100%)</b> of the participating programs still in operation receiving technical assistance and completing a technical assistance evaluation will document increased knowledge of quality programming.	<b>Exceeded</b> At the end of the project in 2015, <b>(100%)</b> of participating programs that received technical assistance and completed a technical assistance evaluation documented increased knowledge of quality programming.	<b>Exceeded</b> At the conclusion of the RTT/ELC project, <b>99.5%</b> of Temporary and 1- & 2 - star programs receiving TA and still in operation achieved a minimum of a 3 - star rated license.
At the conclusion of each RTT/ELC calendar year, DCDEE and CCR&R staff will track progress of those programs that have attained a 3-star or higher rated license.	<b>Achieved</b> All participating programs were tracked throughout the project on a monthly basis as evidenced in monthly reports.	<b>Achieved</b> All participating programs were tracked throughout the project on a monthly basis as evidenced in monthly reports.	<b>Achieved</b> All participating programs were tracked throughout the project on a monthly basis as evidenced in monthly reports.	<b>Achieved</b> All participating programs were tracked throughout the project on a monthly basis as evidenced in monthly reports.
<b>At the conclusion of the RttT ELC calendar year 2015, less than 5% of children birth-5 will be enrolled in 1- and 2-star rated licensed programs.</b>			<b>Exceeded</b> At the conclusion of the RttT ELC calendar year 2015, 3.3% of children are currently enrolled in 1 and 2 star rated licensed programs. If GS 110 programs are included, only 3.6% of the children were enrolled in a 1 or 2 star rated program, thus exceeding the 5% goal.	<b>Exceeded</b> At the conclusion of the RttT ELC calendar year 2015, 3.3% of children are currently enrolled in 1 and 2 star rated licensed programs. If GS 110 programs are included, only 3.6% of the children were enrolled in a 1 or 2 star rated program, thus exceeding the 5% goal.

In addition to the successful achievement of the performance measures, RLAs have reported positive outcomes as a result of this activity. This project has supported the efforts of CCR&R agencies to explore new strategies for encouraging Temporary, 1- and 2- star programs to increase licensure, especially family child care homes (FCCH). In many cases, FCCHs have not been interested in increasing licensure but have been open to ways that they can improve the quality of their care, such as participation in professional associations, leadership academies, or specific trainings and educational pursuits where they have not previously been interested. The collaboration between DCDEE licensing consultants and CCR&R TA staff (1,173 contacts over the three year period of the grant) has been extremely beneficial for child care facilities as they have all worked together to develop quality improvement plans for increasing licensure. Additionally, regions reported that the new Temporary licensed programs were more receptive to increasing licensure and more apt to change. Grant funds have also allowed some regions the ability to hire additional TA staff that has been critical in providing the assistance needed to move programs along in the process of achieving higher licensure.

It was reported that FCCHs were more challenging than centers to motivate towards higher licensure. In June 2014, regional lead agencies surveyed the Temporary, 1- and 2- star facilities (most of those family child care homes) in their regions who had indicated that they would not seek higher licensure. The top reasons cited were: no interest in higher education or assessments; no benefit seen; no waiting list; do not receive child care subsidy; and older (retirement approaching).

### **Lessons Learned:**

- Intentional collaborations between DCDEE consultants and CCR&R technical assistance staff has contributed greatly to the success of this activity. Future opportunities for continued collaboration should be explored.
- While the incentives were a motivator, larger incentives could have had a greater impact.
- When additional TA support was funded through this grant, there was more on site support which was much needed in all regions.

### **Recommendations:**

- Seek additional funding to support hiring and training of additional TA and professional development staff to support individuals as soon as they become interested in opening a child care program. It is more difficult to change attitudes in regard to licensing after providers have been in the field for a longer period of time. Even after the initial start up, the programs need support in maintaining quality in their programs.
- Continue collaborations between DCDEE regulatory and CCR&R technical assistance staff.
- Seek additional funding to support quality initiatives within child care programs.

### Regional Success Stories

1. One of the programs participating in TA as part of RttT- ELC is a Montessori school. Often, Montessori schools are seen as challenging in attaining a high star rating due to staff members' specific education and training which limits education points and because their tailored curriculum requires specific materials and structure that often doesn't score the highest on the environment rating scales.

When the TA specialist first met with the director, she expressed her concern with the challenges. The TA specialist and director discussed the possibility of the program obtaining a higher star rating with support from technical assistance. The TA and director developed a plan to help guide the work that needed to be done.

The TA specialist began observations and mock assessments, working with all of the teachers in three rooms. The staff members were open-minded, and already had excellent language, discipline, and child-centered structure in place. Each one of these teachers listened carefully to the suggestions made and quickly made any adaptations they could. Every time the TA specialist made a room arrangement or materials suggestion to the director, the TA specialist would find that by the next visit the suggestions had materialized into positive change.

Through the diligent efforts of the teachers and director, materials were carefully selected that fit into the existing program, room arrangement was tweaked, displays were added that reflected diversity, and cozy corners were incorporated. We found ways to add dramatic play, art, and sand/water play into the classrooms that did not compromise the Montessori philosophy and approach.

The program completed their environment rating scales assessment and did well. The program was able to achieve 5 out of 7 points in program standards and earned 4 stars. After earning 4 stars the program continued to work on staff education. Staff members completed course work over the summer. In September 2015 the program moved to 5 stars!

2. We had several new facilities and some 1 & 2 star sites and are very proud to report that several of the new sites have achieved their 3-5 star licenses and are working hard to maintain their ratings. The new sites did not have enough age-appropriate high quality materials to be able to achieve a higher rating in program standards. Thanks to Race to the Top grants, we were able to offer them small mini grants for appropriate materials which helped them score higher on the Environment Rating Scales under activities. We were also able to provide intense TA to those sites so they would improve their overall quality.

We worked with several Family Child Care Homes that had only 1 or 2 stars and with the help of our intense TA and mini grants we were able to help them achieve a 3 or higher star rating.

In our county we had a Family Child Care home that had been a 2 star for many years. The provider stated she would never go for higher stars because she did not want an assessment. We finally got her to agree to let us work with her and offer intensive TA using the FCCERS. She was very nervous and just felt she could not do this. We coached and mentored her. As she gained confidence she agreed to an assessment and apply for a higher star. She did well and received a 3 star. This provider is now working on achieving a 4 or 5 star rated license.

3. I began providing TA through RttT CCR&R Enhancement when the center was on a temporary licensing status awaiting their ERS. During our first meeting the director/owner's showed a true commitment to improving her center's quality and a passion for the children of that community. All staff worked diligently on all aspects of child care health and safety, teacher/child interactions, creating developmentally appropriate environments, working to establish smooth transitions between activities and intentionally planning meaningful activities for the children's success.

Since receiving TA the program has received four stars in the state's Star rating system. This has not just changed the program and staff but it has also changed the lives of the children served by the program. The teaching staff can see improvements in the children's self-regulation and independence, as well as their ability to play well together.